

## **What are bed bugs?**

Bed bugs (*Cimex lectularius*) are small, flat, parasitic insects that feed solely on the blood of people and animals while they sleep. Bed bugs are reddish-brown in color, wingless, range from 1mm to 7mm (roughly the size of Lincoln's head on a penny), and can live several months without a blood meal.

## **Protecting Yourself from Bed Bugs in Public Places**

It is very unlikely, though not impossible, that a bed bug infestation will develop in an office, classroom, or other non-residential environment, such as a department store. However, these sites can serve as transfer hubs for bed bugs to hitchhike a ride into your home. Management, staff, students and workers all have roles to play in reducing the spread of bed bugs.

## **Steps You Can Take**

- Reduce clutter. Clutter serves as an ideal habitat for bed bugs whether at home, school or office. By reducing clutter in your workplace or school, you provide fewer places for the bed bugs to hide and fewer opportunities for them to hitchhike to your home.
- Keep your belongings stowed separately from those of other people. If there is a known problem with bed bugs in the office or school, consider storing your belongings in a plastic bin.
- Be vigilant in areas where bed bugs are most likely to be found, which include break rooms, storage areas (coat closets or cubbies), offices or lounges with upholstered furniture, or areas where people may rest.
- Establish a monitoring program so that if a bed bug is found in an area the status of that area will be formally tracked.
- Multiple sightings in the same area could indicate an infestation or multiple reintroductions from someone's home.
- Educate the staff so that they know what to do if a bug is found that appears to be a bed bug.
- Discourage panic and the stigma associated with bed bugs. These are counterproductive and can make treatment more difficult.
- Vacuum daily to pick up any stray bugs before they settle in.

## **If a Bed Bug is Found**

- Inform management and facility staff who has the lead in any control efforts.
- Only treat if a true infestation is found with breeding bed bugs. Remember, a single bed bug is not an infestation.
- Hire a pest professional that uses integrated pest management techniques.
- You can minimize exposure of workers or students by applying pesticides on a Friday evening, or other time that building occupants are not present.
- Alert everyone who works in the building. Let staff know how the sighting will be handled. This allows them to take additional precautions to protect their homes as well as limiting rumors and speculation.

## **Keep the Infestation from Spreading**

- Anything removed from the room should be placed in a sealed plastic bag and treated.
- Items that cannot be treated should be placed in a sealed plastic bag and left for an extended period of time to ensure any active bugs are dead (research shows variation in the length of time needed, but it can be as long as a year).
- Empty the vacuum after each use.
- Seal the bag and throw it out in an outdoor trash container.
- Don't discard furniture if you can eliminate the bed bugs from it.
- If furniture cannot be salvaged, discard it responsibly. Destroy it so someone else won't be tempted to bring it into his or her home. For example:
- Rip covers and remove stuffing from furniture items.
- Use spray paint to mark furniture with "Bed Bugs."
- Take steps to have infested items picked up as soon as possible by the trash collection agency.

## **Protecting Your Home from Bed Bugs**

Bed bugs are great hitchhikers. They can move from an infested site to a new home by traveling on furniture, bedding, luggage, boxes, and clothing.

Although they typically feed on blood every five to ten days, bed bugs can be quite resilient; they are capable of surviving several months to a year without feeding.

### **A few simple precautions can help prevent bed bug infestation in your home:**

- Inspect the luggage rack in your hotel room for bed bugs.
- Check secondhand furniture, beds, and couches for any signs of bed bug infestation before bringing them home.
- Use a protective cover that encases mattresses and box springs and eliminates many hiding spots. The light color of the encasement makes bed bugs easier to see. Be sure to purchase a high quality encasement that will resist tearing and check the encasements regularly for holes.
- Reduce clutter in your home to reduce hiding places for bed bugs.
- Vacuum frequently to remove any successful hitchhikers.
- Be vigilant when using shared laundry facilities. Transport items to be washed in plastic bags (if you have an active infestation, use a new bag for the journey home). Remove from dryer directly into bag and fold at home. (A dryer on high heat can kill bed bugs.)
- If you live in a multi-family home, try to isolate your unit by:
- Installing door sweeps on the bottom of doors to discourage movement into hallways.
- Sealing cracks and crevices around baseboards, light sockets, etc., to discourage movement through wall voids.
- Consider purchasing a portable heating chamber to treat any items that you believe may have bed bugs.
- Be sure to read and carefully follow the directions if you use one of these units and be aware that they are not regulated by EPA or other federal agencies.